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# Christian History ;

Containing Account of the Propagation and Revival  
of Religion in *Great Britain, America, &c.*

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Saturday FEBRUARY 2. 1744, 5. § N<sup>o</sup>. 101.  
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*Accounts of the Revival of Religion in Boston;  
continued.*

**H**E seem'd to have no Regard to please the Eyes of his Hearers with agreeable Gesture, nor their Ears with Delivery, nor their Fancy with Language ; but to aim directly at their *Hearts* and *Consciences*, to lay open their ruinous Delusions, shew them their numerous, secret, hypocritical Shifts in Religion, and drive them out of every deceitful Refuge wherein they made themselves easy, with the Form of Godliness without the Power. And many who were pleased in a good Conceit of themselves before, now found, to their great Distress, they were only self-deceived Hypocrites. And tho' while the Discovery was making, some at first raged, as they have owned to me and others ; yet in the Progress of the Discovery many were forced to submit ; and then the Power of GOD so broke and humbled them, that they wanted a further and even a thorough Discovery ; they went to hear him, that the secret Corruptions and Delusions of their Hearts might be more discovered ; and the more *searching* the Sermon, the more acceptable it was to their anxious Minds.

From the terrible and deep Convictions he had passed thro' in his own Soul, he seem'd to have such a lively View of the divine Majesty, the Spirituality, Purity, Extensiveness, and Strictness of his Law ; with his glorious Holiness, and Displeasure at Sin, his Justice, Truth and Power in punishing the Damned ; that the very Terrors of GOD seem'd to rise in his Mind afresh, when he display'd and brandish'd them in the Eyes of unreconciled Sinners. And tho' some could not bear the Representation, and avoided his Preaching ; yet

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the *Arrows of Conviction*, by his Ministry, seem'd so deeply to pierce the Hearts of others, and even some of the most stubborn Sinners, as to make them fall down at the Feet of CHRIST, and yield a lowly Submission to him.

And here I cannot but observe, that those who call these *Convictions* by the Name of religious *Frights* or *Fears*, and then ascribe them to the meer *natural* or *mechanical* Influence of terrible *Words*, *Sounds* and *Gestures*, moving *Tones*, or boisterous *Ways* of speaking, appear to me to be not sufficiently acquainted with the Subjects of this Work, as carried on in the Town in general, or with the Nature of their *Convictions*; or at least as carried on among the People I have conversed with. For I have had awakened People of every Assembly of the congregational and presbyterian Way in Town, in considerable Numbers repairing to me from Time to Time; and from their various and repeated Narratives shall show the Difference.

I don't remember any crying out, or falling down, or fainting, either under Mr. *Whitefield's* or Mr. *Tennent's* Ministry all the while they were here; tho' many, both Women and Men, both those who had been vicious, and those who had been moral, yea, some Religious and Learned, as well as Unlearned, were in great Concern of Soul. But as Dr. *Colman* well express'd it in his Letter of November 23. 1741. 'We have seen little of those Extreams or supposed Blessings of this Work in *Boston*, but much of the blessed Fruits of it have fallen to our Share. God has spoken to us in a more soft and calm Wind; and we have neither had those Outcries and Faintings in our Assemblies, which have disturbed the Worship in many Places; nor yet those Manifestations of Joy inexpressible, which now fill some of our Eastern Parts.' †

As to Mr. *Whitefield's* Preaching --- It was, in the Manner, moving, earnest, winning, melting: But the mechanical Influence of this, according to the usual Operations of mechanical Powers, in two or three Days expired, with many in two or three Hours; and I believe with the most

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† His Letter at the End of Mr. *Edwards's* Sermon, of the distinguishing Marks of a Work of the SPIRIT of God, printed at London in 1742.

as soon as the Sound was over, or they got out of the House, or in the first Conversation they fell into. But with the *Manner* of his Preaching, wherein he appear'd to be in earnest, he deliver'd *those vital Truths* which animated all our Martyrs, made them triumph in Flames, and led his Hearers into the View of that *vital, inward, active Piety* which is the meer Effect of the mighty and supernatural Operation of a divine Power on the Souls of Men; which only will support and carry through the sharpest Trials, and make meet for the Inheritance of the Saints in Light. His chief and earnest Desires and Labours appeared to be the same with the Apostle *Paul* for the visible Saints at *Ephesus*; viz. that they might know (i. e. by Experience) *what is the exceeding Greatness of his Power* (i. e. the Power of God) *to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty Power which he wrought in CHRIST when he raised him from the Dead.* Eph. 1. And they were these Things, and this Sort of Preaching with surprizing Fervency that the HOLY SPIRIT was pleas'd to use as Means to make many sensible they knew nothing of these mighty Operations, nor of these vital Principles within them; but that with *Simon Magus*, who was a visible Believer and Professor of CHRIST and his Religion, they were *in the Gall of Bitterness, and in the Band of Iniquity*; i. e. in the State, Pollution, Guilt and Power of Sin, which is inexpressibly more disagreeable to the holy God than the most bitter Gall to Men, and will be Bitterness to them, without a mighty Change, in the latter End.

It was by such Means as these, that the HOLY SPIRIT seized and awakened the Consciences of many; and when the mechanical Influence on the animal Passions ceased, still continued these Convictions, not only for many Days, but Weeks and Months after the Sound was over; yea, in this very Day with some; while they excited others to an earnest and persevering Application to JESUS for his SPIRIT to quicken them, till they came to an hopeful Perception of his quickening Influence in them; and while in others the sovereign and offended SPIRIT leaving off to strive, these Convictions in their Consciences, the Effects thereof, have either sooner or later died away.

As to Mr. Tennent's Preaching --- It was frequently both terrible and searching. It was often for Matter justly terrible, as he according to the inspired Oracles exhibited the

dreadful Holiness, Justice, Law, Threatnings, Truth, Power, Majesty of God; and his Anger with rebellious, impenitent, unbelieving and christless Sinners; the awful Danger they were every Moment in of being struck down to Hell, and being damned for ever; with the amazing Miseries of that Place of Torment. But his Exhibitions both for *Matter* and *Manner* fell inconceivably below the Reality: And tho' this terrible Preaching may strongly work on the animal Passions and frighten the Hearers, rouse the Soul, and prepare the Way for terrible Convictions; yet those meer animal *Terrors*, and these *Convictions* are quite different Things.

Nothing is more obvious than for People to be greatly terrified with the Apprehensions of God, Eternity and Hell, and yet have no *Convictions*.

As in *Old England & New* I have been a constant Preacher and Observer of the religious State of those who heard me, for above *thirty Years*; they have passed under many Scores of most dreadful *Tempests of Thunder and Lightning*: where-in, as the *Psalmist* represents, 'the Voice of the LORD was upon the Waters, the GOD of Glory thundered, the Voice of the LORD was powerful, the Voice of the LORD was full of Majesty; the Voice of the LORD broke the Cedars, divided the Flames of Fire, shook the Wilderness, & (in the darkest Night) discovered the Forests'. Yea, even since the Revival, viz. On *Friday Night July 30. 1742*, at the *Lecture* in the *South Church*, near nine o'Clock, being very dark, there came on a very terrible Storm of *Thunder and Lightning*: And just as the Blessing was given, an amazing Clap broke over the Church with piercing Repetitions, which set many a shrieking, and the whole Assembly into great Consternation: God then appeared 'terrible out of his high Places; they heard attentively the Noise of his Voice, and the Sound that went out of his Mouth; he directed it under the whole Heaven, and his Lightning to the Ends of the Earth; after it a Voice roared, he thundered marvelously with his Voice: and at this the Hearts of many (as *Elihu's*) trembled, and were moved out of their Places' for near two Hours together. And yet in all these Displays of the Majesty of God, and terrifying Apprehensions of Danger of sudden Destruction, neither in *this surprizing Night*, nor in all the Course of *thirty Years* have I scarce known any by these Kinds of Terrors brought under genu-  
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the Convictions. And what *Minister* has a Voice like God, and who can thunder like Him?

So on Lord's-Day *June 3d* last, in our Time of publick Worship in the Forenoon, when we had been about a Quarter of an Hour in Prayer, the mighty Power of GOD came on with a surprizing Roar and Earthquake; which made the House with all the Galleries to rock and tremble, with such a grating Noise as if the Bricks were moving out of their Places to come down and bury us: which exceedingly disturb'd the Congregation, excited the Shrieks of many, put many on flying out, and the Generality in Motion. But tho' many were greatly terrified, yet in a *Day* or *two* their *Terrors* seem'd to vanish, and I know of but two or three seized by *Convictions* on this awful Occasion.

No! *Conviction* is quite another Sort of a Thing. It is the Work of the SPIRIT of GOD, a sovereign, free and almighty Agent; wherein he gives the sinful Soul such a clear and lively View of the Glory of the divine Sovereignty, Omnipresence, Holiness, Justice, Truth and Power; the Extensiveness, Spirituality and Strictness of his *Law*, the binding Nature, Efficacy and Dreadfulness of his *Curses*; the Multitude and Heinousness of its *Sins* both of Commission and Omission; the horrible Vileness, Wickedness, Perverseness and Hypocrisy of the *Heart*, with its utter *Impotence* either rightly to repent, or believe in CHRIST, or change itself: so that it sees itself in a lost, *undone* and perishing State; without the least Degree of *Worthiness* to recommend it to the holy and righteous GOD, and the least Degree of *Strength* to help itself out of this Condition. These Discoveries are made by Means of some *revealed Truths*, either in the *Reading, Hearing* or *Remembrance*: when in the *Hearing*, sometimes by Words of Terror, and sometimes by Words of Tenderness: And the HOLY SPIRIT with such internal Evidence and Power so applies them to the Conscience, that they become as *sharp Arrows* piercing into the *Heart*, wounding, paining and sticking in it, when all the mechanical Impressions of frightful Sounds are over, sometimes for *many Days, Weeks* and *Months*, if not *Years* together; until this DIVINE AGENT, by these and other Convictions, agreeable to his inspired *Word*, intirely subdues the Soul to CHRIST; or being ungratefully treated, withdraws his convincing Influence,

fluence, and leaves the Heart and Conscience to greater and more dangerous Hardness and Stupidity than ever.

Such were the *Convictions* wrought in *many Hundreds* in this Town by Mr. Tennent's *searching* Ministry : And such was the Case of those *many Scores* of several other Congregations as well as mine, who came to me and others for Direction under them. † And indeed by all their Converse I found, it was not so much the *Terror* as the *searching* Nature of his Ministry, that was the principal Means of their *Conviction*. It was not merely, nor so much his laying open the *Terrors* of the Law and Wrath of GOD, or Damnation of Hell ; (for this they could pretty well bear, as long as they hoped these belonged not to them, or they could easily avoid them ;) as his laying open their many vain and secret *Shifts* and *Refuges*, *counterfeit Resemblances* of Grace, *delusive* and *damning Hopes*, their utter *Impotence*, and impending Danger of Destruction : whereby they found all their Hopes and Refuges of Lies to fail them, and themselves exposed to eternal Ruin, unable to help themselves, and in a lost Condition. This *searching* Preaching was both the *suitable* and principal Means of their *Conviction* : Tho' 'tis most evident, the *most proper Means* are utterly *insufficient* ; and wholly depend on the *sovereign Will* of GOD, to put forth his *Power* and apply them by this or that Instrument, on this or that Person, at this or that Season, in this or that Way or Manner ; with these or those permitted Circumstances, Infirmities, Corruptions, Errors, Agencies, Oppositions ; and to what Degree, Duration and Event he pleases.

A remarkable Instance of *Conviction* also, has been sometimes under the Ministry of the Rev. Mr. Edwards of Northampton : A Preacher of a low and moderate Voice, a natural Way of Delivery ; and without any Agitation of Body, or any Thing else in the Manner to excite Attention ; except his habitual and great *Solemnity*, looking and

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† The same Kind of *searching* Preaching by our own Ministers and others, I also observed was the most successful Means of bringing People into powerful *Convictions*, or clear and awakening Views of their *sinful* and *lost* Condition, and their absolute Need of CHRIST to find and save them.

speaking as in the Presence of God, and with a weighty Sense of the Matter delivered. And on the other Hand, I have known several very worthy Ministers of loud and rousing Voices; and yet to their great Sorrow the Generality of their People, for a long Course of Years asleep in deep Secularity. It is just as the HOLY SPIRIT pleases, to hide Occasions of Pride from Man: And if Mr. Tennent was to come here again and preach more rousingly than ever, it may be, *not one* Soul would come under *Conviction* by him.

On Monday *March 2. 1740, 1.* Mr. Tennent preach'd his farewell Sermon to the People of *Boston*, from *Acts xi. 23.* to an Auditory extremely crowded, very attentive and much affected, in Dr. Colman's House of Worship. It was an affectionate Parting, and as great Numbers of all Conditions and Ages appear'd awakened by him, there seem'd to be a general Sadness at his going away.

Tho' it was natural for 'em to resort abundantly to him by whom it pleas'd the sovereign God chiefly to awaken them, for Advice in their Soul Concerns; yet while he was here, many repair'd to their Ministers also, and many more and oftener when he was gone. Mr. Tennent's Ministry, with the various Cases of those resorting to us, excited us 'to treat more largely of the Workings of the SPIRIT of Grace, as a SPIRIT of *Conviction* and *Conversion*, *Consolation* and *Edification* in the Souls of Men, agreeable to the *Holy Scriptures*, and the common Experiences of true Believers.

And now was such a Time as we never knew. The Rev. Mr. Cooper was won't to say, that more came to him in *one Week* in deep Concern about their Souls, than in the whole *twenty-four Years* of his preceeding Ministry. I can also say the same as to the Numbers who repaired to me. By Mr. Cooper's Letter to his Friend in *Scotland*, it appears, he has had about *six Hundred* different Persons in *three Months* Time: And Mr. Webb informs me, he has had in the same Space above a *Thousand*.

Agreeable to the numerous *Bills* of the Awakened put up in publick, sometimes rising to the Number of *Sixty* at once, there repaired to us both *Boys* and *Girls*, *young Men* and *Women*, *Indians* and *Negrees*, *Heads of Families*, *aged Persons*; those who had been in *full Communion* and going on in a Course of Religion *many Years*. And their Cases represented were; a blind Mind, a vile and hard Heart, and some under

under a deep Sense thereof ; some under great Temptations ; some in great Concern for their Souls ; some in great Distress of Mind for Fear of being unconverted ; others for Fear they had been all along building on a Righteousness of their own, and were still in the Gall of Bitterness and Bond of Iniquity. Some under slighty, others under strong *Convictions* of their Sins and Sinfulness, Guilt and Condemnation, the Wrath and Curse of God upon them, their Impotence and Misery ; some for a long Time, even for *several Months* under these *Convictions* : some fearing least the HOLY SPIRIT should withdraw ; others having quenched his Operations, were in great Distress least he should leave them for ever : Persons *far advanced in Years* afraid of being left behind, while others were hastening to the great REDEEMER.

Nor were the same Persons satisfied with coming *once or twice*, as formerly, but again and again, I know not how often ; complaining of their evil and cursed Hearts ; of their past and present Unbelief, Pride, Hypocrisy, Perfidiousness, Contempt of Christ and God, and Alienation from them, their Love and Captivity to Sin, and utter Impotence to help themselves, or even to believe on Christ, &c. renouncing every Degree of Worthiness in and utterly condemning themselves ; greatly afraid of deceiving their own Souls ; and earnestly desirous of being search'd, discover'd and shown the true Way of Salvation.

Both *People* and *Ministers* seem'd under a divine Influence to quicken each other. The People seem'd to have a renewed Taste for those *old* pious and experimental Writers ; Mr. Hooker, Shepard, Gurnal, William Guthrie, Joseph Alein, Isaac Ambrose, Dr. Owen, & others ; as well as later-- such as Mr. Mead, Flavel, Shaw, Willard, Stoddard, Dr. Increase and Cotton Mather, Mr. Mather of Windsor, Mr. Boston, &c. The *evangelical* Writings of these deceased Authors, as well as of others alive, both in England, Scotland and New-England, were now read with singular Pleasure ; some of them reprinted and in great Numbers quickly bought and studied. And the more *Experimental* our Preaching was, like their's, the more 'twas relished.

( To be continued )